



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Letters vs. Phonemes

**Topic:** Preschool Language and Literacy

**Practice:** Teach Phonological Awareness

### Highlights

- Explains why some people confuse the idea of a sound and the idea of a letter
- Shows the difference between phonemes and letters
- Illustrates why it is important to teach phonological awareness skills in addition to letter knowledge

### About the Source

The Reading Rockets project is comprised of PBS television programs, available on videotape and DVD; online services, including the web sites ReadingRockets.org and ColorinColorado.org; and professional development opportunities. Reading Rockets is an educational initiative of WETA, the flagship public television and radio station in the nation's capital, and is funded by a major grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

## Full Transcript

Most people, even a lot of teachers we've worked with, as you know, will confuse the idea of a letter with the idea of a sound because we have a problem in English. We have 26 letters and 40 to 44 speech sounds to spell those, so of course you have to use letter combinations to spell some of them. And then we have several spellings for some sounds and several sounds for some spellings. So, you know, if we count the number of sounds in "shoe," there are two, "sh" and "oo." Even though there are 4 letters. Many adults, if I ask them to tell me the number of sounds in the word "six" will tell me that there are 3. They'll go "sss...i...x." But the way I count those sounds is "s...i...k...s." And the way I would prove that is that "sick" has 3 sounds, "s...i...k," and if you add a "sss," on to the end of "sick" you get "six." But it's confusing because we use 3 letters for 4 sounds. That's a revelation to a lot of people, but it's the most critical underlying skill that will help the children learn to read and spell.